

## Heart of the City

by zillazilla

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Summary: A simple short bringing to light the struggles of one of the last groups of resistance fighters as they make their way to the train station and leave City 17 behind forever.

## Heart of the City

Gunshots echo through the heart of City 17. A small group of resistance fighters are pushing their way through the square just outside of the citadel, but the battle flags in the Combines favor. Their final goalâ€"reach the train station and leave the city forever. They were almost there. A young man with a pulse rifle crouches and takes out a near-by combine soldier and urges the group ever onward. He glances nervously around, scanning the group. He relaxes slightly as he spots her running and making it for cover unharmed. He only risked a glance before returning his attention to the fighting.

A new wave of soldiers shoots at them from up ahead. He can hear and feel the bullets rush past him, and a member of the group cries out in pain. He provides cover fire and asks quickly, "You alright?"

The person regains his grounding and picks his gun back up. "Just grazed. Nothing too serious."

The man nodded and cried out, "Come on! Almost there!" He waved them forward.

He felt the woman run up beside him. "How are you holding up?" She asked, firing at an officer in the distance with her SMG.

"Pretty good, you?"

She smiled slightly. "Doing alright."

A metallic groan drowns out the sound of gunfire and causes the group to flinch towards the ground.

Suddenly, the screech gets louder and a member cries out,  
"STRIDER!"

Everyone sprints forward, trying to outrun it.

The man grabs his lovers hand and pulls her forward. "Come one, hurry!" He could hear the panic in his own voice, and he knew she could too.

The creature screamed its rage and fired at them, crouching down on its stilts. The man with the grazed arm was gunned down instantly, and another woman was a moment later.

For the first time in his life, the man felt truly scared.

"Come on, come on!" He was tugging the woman behind him, his thoughts lost in chaos, and he heard her whimper slightly.

The combine were backing off, letting the Strider pick off the group.

He watched as the people in front of him were killed; some instantly and other simply shot down and left to cry out for help before being finished off. He didn't stop.

The Strider was right behind them, but they were almost there. Just a little more, just a few more seconds before they reached their goal.

He felt a bullet fly past his left leg, and her hand slip out of his. He turned around swiftly.

The bullet that missed his leg had struck hers. It hit the middle of her shin and clearly struck bone, shattered splinters of her femur shredded their way through her skin, a stark white against the vivid red of her blood.

He only has a second to take in the scene before the point of one of the Striders stilts impaled her.

"No!" He cried, without thinking. He heard her scream as the Strider lifted its stilt with her still impaled, and flicked its leg to rid itself of her as one would flick away droplets of water from their fingers.

He never felt himself drop his rifle, and he didn't notice the Strider walk over him, barely escaping the same fate as his lover. All he knew was that he needed to get to her.

She was flung against a large piece of rubble that most likely came from the half destroyed building behind it. Blood pooled around her, and she tried fruitlessly to hold it all in from the large hole in her front.

"No. No, no." The man whispered as he reached her, kneeling at her side. He could feel her blood, still warm, leak into the fabric of his pants and he placed his gloved hands on her face.

Her eyes focused on him, and she flashed him a red smile before

coughing weakly, a small trickle of blood trailing down from the corner of her mouth and left nostril. She reached up with one warm hand, wet from her life force, and pressed it into his hand on her cheek.

"Hey," She murmured, the smile still on her small face. "Hey, listen. It's okay. Listen, it's okay."

All he could do was look into her green eyes. He didn't say anything. He forgot about the battle, about the plan, about the combine. The world grew quiet and all he could hear was her words. It was as though time stood still for just the two of them.

She shuddered in pain, but her eyes never left him. "Listen, everything will be okay." She repeated, her voice growing frail. She was dying, but there was a fierceness in her eyes. "Look, we made it. There's the station."

The man was sobbing now. "I love you." He managed to choke out, his voice and body shaking with each wave of sorrow.

She laughed lightly before coughing again, her hand pressing against his harder. "I love you too."

He didn't notice that the Combine had moved in and picked off the rest of the group. He didn't even feel the bullet in his back.

End  
file.